



Natural Resources Conservation Service
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

NRCS Puerto Rico State Technical Committee Meeting



February 11, 2026
International Institute of Tropical Forestry

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

Agenda

- 1. Director's Welcome & Introduction – *Luis Cruz Arroyo***
- 2. STC Meetings & Efforts Recap – *Ricardo Colón***
- 3. NRCS Conservation Programs Update – *Frank Velazquez & Javier Cruz***
 - a) FY 2025 Recap
 - b) FY 2026 Focus
 - a) Ranking Categories
 - b) Caribbean Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)
- 4. National Cooperative Soil Survey Activities & New Crop Productivity Indexes – *Manuel Matos***
- 5. Priority Watersheds Discussion – *Mario Rodriguez***
- 6. Partner Updates**
- 7. Wrap-up**



NRCS FY2026 Chief Priorities: A Farmer-First Approach

Under Chief Aubrey Bettencourt's leadership, NRCS has established five core priorities for FY2026 focused on streamlining operations, improving field-level service, and advancing outcome-based conservation.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land | Reducing loss of productive farmland through targeted conservation easement programs (ACEP). |
| 2 | Modernize Infrastructure and Technology | "One Farmer, One File" system, upgraded field office technology, reduced paper-heavy processes. |
| 3 | Recenter Field Engagement | Shifting staff to direct, in-person technical assistance; faster conservation planning. |
| 4 | Strengthen Partnerships | Leveraging partners as force multipliers; accepting third-party certified plans. |
| 5 | Outcome-Based Conservation | Measuring success through on-the-ground environmental improvements, not just acres covered. |

Key FY2026 Initiatives:

Regenerative Pilot Program (\$400M EQIP + \$300M CSP) | CART for all program ranking | "Farmer First" to reduce administrative burden

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STC Meetings & Efforts Recap

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Past STC Meeting - December 11, 2024

- Survey discussion
- Open Business
 - Funds distribution, Act Now, Schedule
 - EQIP: 10 M
 - EQIP IRA: 20M
 - CSP: 1M
 - CSP IRA: 1M
 - Priority Watersheds
 - Caribbean Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for Wetland Reserve Easements
 - Conservation Innovation Grants (CIG)



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NRCS Conservation Programs Update

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
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FY 2025 Financial Assistance by Programs

EQIP and CSP

Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)

- EQIP is NRCS' flagship financial assistance program for working lands, helping producers make improvements to benefit agriculture and conservation.
 - Farmer Contracts – 226
 - Obligations – \$19.53 million
 - Payments – \$12.54 million
 - Acres – 7,710

Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)

- CSP offers financial incentives for producers to not only maintain the existing level of conservation on the land, but to incorporate new or advanced conservation activities to take stewardship to the next level.
 - Farmer Contracts – 100
 - Obligations – \$3.01 million
 - Payments – \$826,529
 - Acres – 7,117



FY 2025 Active Contracts

Field Office / Area	Active Contracts
Arecibo Service Center	111
Caguas Service Center	125
Corozal Service Center	108
Juana Díaz Service Center	170
Mayaguez Service Center	107
San Sebastián Service Center	114
St. Croix Service Center	82
Utuado Service Center	141
Caribbean Area	958



FY 2026 Accounts and Allocations by Program Focus

EQIP, CSP and ACEP

FY 2026 EQIP Categories

Account Type	Allocation	Amount
EQIP Total	100%	\$14,070,000
CPAs, DIAs, CEMAs	2%	\$281,400
Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR)	5%	\$703,500
Disaster	4%	\$562,800
Water Quantity	8%	\$1,125,600
CAFO/Energy	5%	\$703,500
Wildlife & Joint Chief*	10%	\$1,157,000
SDFR Mountainous Region	15%	\$2,110,500
SDFR Coastal, Hills and Valleys Region	23%	\$3,236,100
Regenerative Pilot Program	25%	\$3,517,500
General/Organic	1%	\$140,700
Reserve/Overrun Subaccount	2%	\$281,400
Reserved I	0%	\$0
Reserved II	0%	\$0

*\$250,000 must be used for Joint Chief Initiative.

FY 2026 CSP Categories

Funding Pool	Account Type	Allocation	Amount
	CSP Total	100%	\$4,428,000
NIPF		15%	\$664,200
Agricultural	Beginning Farmers & Ranchers (BFR)	5%	\$221,400
	Socially Disadvantaged (SD)	50%	\$2,214,000
	Regenerative Pilot Program	25%	\$1,107,000
	General	1%	\$ 44,280.00
	Organic	1%	\$ 44,280.00
	Reserve/Overrun Subaccounts	3%	\$132,840
	Reserved Categories I, II, III	0%	\$0

FY 2026 ACEP Accounts

Agricultural Conservation Easements Program	Allocation
Agricultural Land Easements General	\$1,000,000
Wetland Reserve Easements General	\$1,000,000
Wetland Reserve Easements Stewardship	\$10,000



FY 2026 Programs Implementation Schedule

EQIP, CSP, RCPP and ACEP

FY 2026 Program Implementation Schedule

Caribbean Area NRCS Program Implementation Schedule FY2026							
Environmental Quality Incentive Program (EQIP)							
Fund Pools	Application Acceptance Deadline	Eligibility Deadline (All documents submitted to FSA)	WPT (Screening) (FO)	CART Assessment & Ranking Deadline (FO)	Application Preapprovals (SO)	Contracts Submitted for Obligation Review	Last Day of Obligation (ASTC-P)
EQIP FA (Signup 1)	15-Jan-26	13-Feb-26	20-Mar-26		27-Mar-26	22-May-26	31-Jul-26
Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP)							
Fund Pools	Application Acceptance Deadline	Eligibility Deadline (All documents submitted to FSA)	WPT (Screening) (FO)	CART Assessment & Ranking Deadline (FO)	Application Preapprovals (SO)	Contracts Submitted for Obligation Review	Last Day of Obligation (ASTC-P)
CSP Classic (Signup 2025-1)	15-Jan-26	13-Feb-26	N/A	20-Mar-26	27-Mar-26	22-May-26	31-Jul-26
Regional Conservation Partnership Program (RCPP)							
Fund Pools	Application Acceptance Deadline	Eligibility Deadline (All documents submitted to FSA)	WPT (Screening) (FO)	CART Assessment & Ranking Deadline (FO)	Application Preapprovals (SO)	Contracts Submitted for Obligation Review	Last Day of Obligation (ASTC-P)
2498 Restoration Initiative RGA	6-Mar-26	10-Apr-26	N/A	8-May-26	15-May-26	14-Aug-26	28-Aug-26
Agricultural Conservation Easement Program (ACEP)							
Fund Pools	Application Acceptance Deadline	Eligibility Deadline (All documents submitted to FSA)	WPT (Screening) (FO)	CART Assessment & Ranking Deadline (SO)	Application Preapprovals (SO)	WRPO Finalized and Cost Estimates in CD	LO Deadline to Respond
ACEP WRE	15-Jan-2026	13-Feb-2026	N/A	13-Feb-26	13-Feb-26	13-Mar-26	31-Jul-26
.							
*Field offices are responsible for maling intent to proceed letters and completing field verifications after application preapproval.							
*Fund pools with a deadline under the WPT column, will require a the WPT to be completed on ALL eligible and pending applications for which participant submitted all documentation to FSA but is still appears ineligible in our business tools. Only HIGH priority applications will be ranked in first funding cycle. If funds are still available, we will reallocate funds and open a second funding cycle period to evaluate "high" and "medium" applications. In the second round, the applications will be selected by ranking score regardless of the priority. Applications with a medium priority CANNOT be ranked in the first funding cycle. FY2026 Fund Assessment dates: April 3 2026 and June 5 2026. Funds Returns Date July 31, 2026 States should obligate 95% of the funds by September 4 2026.							

Ranking Criteria

FY26 Ranking Pools – (EQIP Survey Questions Example)

FY26 National Instruction

- Establish minimum number of geographic pools needed per Program to support the signup.
- Determine categories needed in each pool based on program and resource needs.
- Applicability** and **Category** sections do not earn points. These sections are to determine applicability and categorize the application. Multiple categories can be selected.

Section: Applicability		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Did the applicant submitted a NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application, for Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), for a farm operation located in Puerto Rico or US Virgin Islands?	YES	--
	NO	--
Section: Category		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Application Category. Select all that apply.	Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BFR)	--
	Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher (SDFR) Mountainous Region	--
	Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher (SDFR) Coastal, Hills or Valleys Region	--
	Regenerative Pilot Program	--
	Wildlife	--
	Joint Chiefs Landscape Restoration Initiative (JCLRP)	--
	Water Quantity	--
	CPA, DIA, CEMA	--
	CAFO/Energy	--
	Disaster	--
	General-Organic	--
	Reserved Category I	--
	Reserved Category II	--

In FY2026 Caribbean Area will have only 1 ranking pool for EQIP with multiple categories

EQIP Program Section – Must not exceed 200 points

- Some questions in this section will be answered for all applications, but other questions are conditional to the categories selected.
- Questions with * are conditional and will only be available to answer if the Category associated to this question was selected in the previous section (Category Section)

Section: Program		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Did the applicant self-certify as a beginning farmer or rancher on the NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application?	YES	10
	NO	0
Does the applicant meet the NRCS definition of a veteran farmer or rancher (VFR)?	YES	10
	NO	0
Did the applicant participate in the CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP), and has the land in the EQIP application come out of CRP within the last 2 years?	YES	5
	NO	0
Did the applicant self-certify as a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher on the NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application?	YES	10
	NO	0
Is the project located in the designated Socially Disadvantaged Mountainous Region? (ADJUNTAS, CIALES, JAYUYA, UTUADO, AIBONITO, BARRANQUITAS, COMERIO, COROZAL, MOROVIS, NARANJITO, OROCOVIS, TOA ALTA, LARES, LAS MARIAS, MARICAO, VILLALBA, CIDRA, CAYEY, SAN LORENZO, AGUAS BUENAS)*	YES	30
	NO	20
Is the project located in the designated Socially Disadvantaged Coastal, Hills or Valleys Region? *	YES	20
	NO	30
Is the applicant willing to develop a whole farm assessment and plan, and include soil testing by planning CEMA 216 in the first and last year of the contract? *	YES	40
	NO	10
Will the application address Aquatic and/or Terrestrial Habitat resource concerns?*	YES	20
	NO	0
Will the application includes practices to benefit and manage Water Quantity concerns?*	YES	20
	NO	0
Is the program application for the development of a Conservation Planning, Activity, Design and Implementation Activity, and/or Conservation Evaluation and Monitoring Activity (CPAs, DIAs, CEMAs)?	YES	10
	NO	0
Conservation treatments for assessed PLUs are in response to effects of a natural disaster in Puerto Rico or USVI?*	YES	20
	NO	0
Will this application address Inefficient Energy Use resource concerns?	YES	15
	NO	0
Will this application include the implementation of conservation practices in a Certified Organic, Transition to Organic or Exempt Organic Operation?*	YES	10
	NO	0

This section will include some geospatial questions.

Geospatial questions use a gis layer and result in a software answered question based on location of the farm and the determined geospatial definition and points assigned.

EQIP Resource Section – Must not exceed 200 points

Some questions in this section will be answered for all applications, but other questions are conditional* to the categories selected or the answer of any question associated in the Program section.

Section: Resource		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Is the agricultural operation located within 150 Ft or less from a sensitive area? (ex: water body, stream, sinkhole, wetland, ditch, etc.)	YES	15
	NO	5
Does any planned land unit (PLU) intersect any impaired stream or waterbody listed in the 303d list?	Yes	15
	No	5
Will this application address soil quality and water quality resource concerns and includes CEMA 216 and at least one primary regenerative management practice? (CEMA 217, CPA 199, 328, 330, 331, 340, 554, 511, 666, 449, 484, 590, 595, 528, 329, 345, 585)*	YES	50
	NO	20
Is the farm located in the Puerto Rico Semiarid Mountains and Valleys, Semiarid Coastal Plains or the US Virgin Islands?*	YES	30
	NO	10
Will the application include practices to address Water Quantity concerns in an Irrigation Special Project area? (Ex. El Hucar Irrigation Project, Isabela Irrigation Project, Bordeaux Irrigation Project, etc.)*	YES	20
	NO	5
Is the program application for development or implementation of CPAs, DIAs or CEMAs of an Agricultural Energy Plan prepared by a TSP, Licensed Professional or Qualified Individual?	YES	10
	NO	0
Are the practices to be applied in response to the disaster in compliance with local, state, and federal laws?*	YES	20
	NO	0
Does the EQIP schedule of operations includes one or more of these practices: 327, 390, 391, 395, 396, 420, 422, 472, 580, 643, 644, 645, 646, 647, 649, 657, 658, 659, to improve terrestrial and/or aquatic wildlife habitats? *	YES	30
	NO	10
Does the EQIP schedule of operations include practices with the intent of increasing habitat for pollinators, beneficial insects, or both?	YES	5
	NO	0
Will the application include the Installation/improvement of conservation buffers to reduce sedimentation in water bodies or address inadequate habitat?	YES	5
	NO	0

This section will also include some geospatial questions.

Geospatial questions use a gis layer and result in a software answered question based on location of the farm and the determined geospatial definition and points assigned.

FY26 Ranking Pools – (CSP Survey Questions Example)

FY26 National Instruction

- NI 440-310 Exhibit H – CSP States must create separate ranking pools for CSP agricultural (AgLand) and non-industrial private forestland (NIPF) and must determine categories needed in each pool based on program and resource needs. (BFR, SDFR, Regenerative and Organic are required for CSP)
- Applicability** and **Category** sections do not earn points. These sections are to determine applicability and categorize the application. Multiple categories can be selected.

Section: Applicability		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Did the applicant submitted a NRCS-CPA-1200 Conservation Program Application for the Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP-2026-1) for an agricultural operation located in Puerto Rico or US Virgin Islands?	YES	--
	NO	--

Section: Category		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Application Category. Select all that apply.	Beginning Farmer and Rancher (BFR)	--
	Socially Disadvantaged Farmer and Rancher (SDFR)	--
	General	--
	Regenerative Pilot Program	--
	Organic	--
	Reserved Category I	--
	Reserved Category II	--
	Reserved Category III	--

In FY2026 Caribbean Area will have 2 ranking pools for CSP,1 for AgLand and 1 for NIPF, with multiple categories

CSP Program Section – Must not exceed 200 points

Some questions in this section will be answered for all applications, but other questions are conditional (*) to the categories selected or to the answer of any other associated question.

Section: Program		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
Does the producer have active CSP contract(s) but chooses not to include the newly acquired/newly eligible land?	YES	-200
	NO	20
Did the applicant self-certified as a socially disadvantaged farmer or rancher on the NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application?	YES	40
	NO	5
Did the applicant self-certified as a beginning farmer or rancher on the NRCS-CPA-1200, Conservation Program Application?	YES	40
	NO	5
Does the applicant meet the NRCS definition of a veteran farmer or rancher (VFR)?*	YES	10
	NO	0
Did the applicant participate in the CRP Transition Incentives Program (TIP), and has the land in the CSP application come out of CRP within the last 2 years?*	YES	10
	NO	0
Is the applicant willing to develop a whole farm assessment, include soil testing by planning CEMA 216 in the first and last year of the contract and at least one primary regenerative management practice? (CEMA 217, CPA 199, 328, 330, 331, 340, 554, 511, 666, 449, 484, 590, 595, 528, 329, 345, 585)*	YES	60
	NO	10
Will this application include the implementation of conservation practices in a Certified Organic, Transition to Organic or Exempt Organic Operation?*	YES	20
	NO	10

CSP Resource Section – Must not exceed 200 points

- States must develop questions using the following criteria.
- The natural resources conservation and environmental benefits of the conservation treatment on all state-identified priority resource concern categories at the time of application (i.e., existing stewardship).
 - How much the proposed conservation activities increase natural resource conservation and environmental benefits (i.e., additional conservation)

Section: Resource		
Question	Answer Choices	Points
At the TIME OF APPLICATION, the applicant meets one of the following.	Four to eight state priority resource concern categories across all land uses in the operation	100
	One to three state priority resource concern categories across all land uses in the operation	80
	Six to eight state priority resource concern categories across all land uses in the operation (excluding farmstead and associated agricultural land)	60
	Three to five state priority resource concern categories across all land uses included in the operation (excluding farmstead and associated agricultural land)	50
	One or two state priority resource concern categories across all land uses included in the operation (excluding farmstead and associated agricultural land)	30
	Four to eight state priority resource concern categories on at least one land use included in the operation (excluding farmstead and associated agricultural land)	20
	One to three state priority resource concern categories on at least one land use included in the operation (excluding farmstead and associated agricultural land)	10
By the END OF THE CONTRACT, the applicant will implement more conservation activities across the operation that will allow the producer to do one of the following.	Exceed the stewardship threshold for more than three additional resource concern categories on at least two land uses	100
	Exceed the stewardship threshold for two or three additional resource concern categories on at least two land uses	90
	Exceed the stewardship threshold for one additional resource concern category on at least two land uses	80
	Exceed the stewardship threshold for more than three additional resource concern categories on one land use	60
	Exceed the stewardship threshold for two or three additional resource concern categories on one land use	50
	Meet the stewardship threshold for two or three additional resource concern categories on at least two land uses	30
	Meet the stewardship threshold for one additional resource concern category on at least two land uses	20
	Meet the stewardship threshold for two or three additional resource concern categories on one land use	10



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A wide-angle photograph of a lush green wetland landscape. In the foreground, there's a large, gnarled tree with sparse yellow leaves. The middle ground shows a winding path or stream through vibrant green marshland. In the background, rolling hills and mountains are visible under a blue sky with scattered white clouds.

Caribbean Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC) for Wetland Reserve Easements (WRE)

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Wetland Reserve Easements Programs

Geographic Area Rate Cap (GARC)

- Each fiscal year the State Conservationist, in consultation with the State Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), must establish a process to determine easement and 30-year land use contract compensation values.
- ACEP-WRE policy guidance is found in the ACEP Manual, 440CPM Part 528, Subpart M, Section 528.122. The basis for the compensation offers for permanent easement or 30-year contract enrollments will be determined based on the lowest of the followings:
 1. The fair market value (FMV) of the land using either of the following: a Uniform Standards for Professional Appraisal Practices (USPAP) individual appraisal.
 2. An area wide market analysis (AWMA) or survey.
 3. The geographic area rate cap (GARC).
 4. An amount voluntarily offered by the landowner.

Puerto Rico GARC

- 95% of FMV, NTE \$20,000/AC
- For Both 30 year and Permanent Easements
- **Under WRE, the landowner is only retaining the right to quiet enjoyment and non-impact recreation.**
- **All agricultural and development rights are forfeited.**

Examples of Current Land Values in PR Real State Websites:

Quebradillas PR: 95 ac @ \$375,000 = \$3,947/ac

Guayanilla PR: 100 ac @ \$299,000 = \$2,990/ac

Ponce PR: 8 ac @ \$120,000 = \$15,000/ac

Luquillo PR: 32 ac @ \$46,153 = \$1,442/ac

Naguabo PR: 9 ac @ \$260,000 = \$28,888/ac

Fajardo PR: 20 ac @ \$2,300,000 = \$115,000/ac

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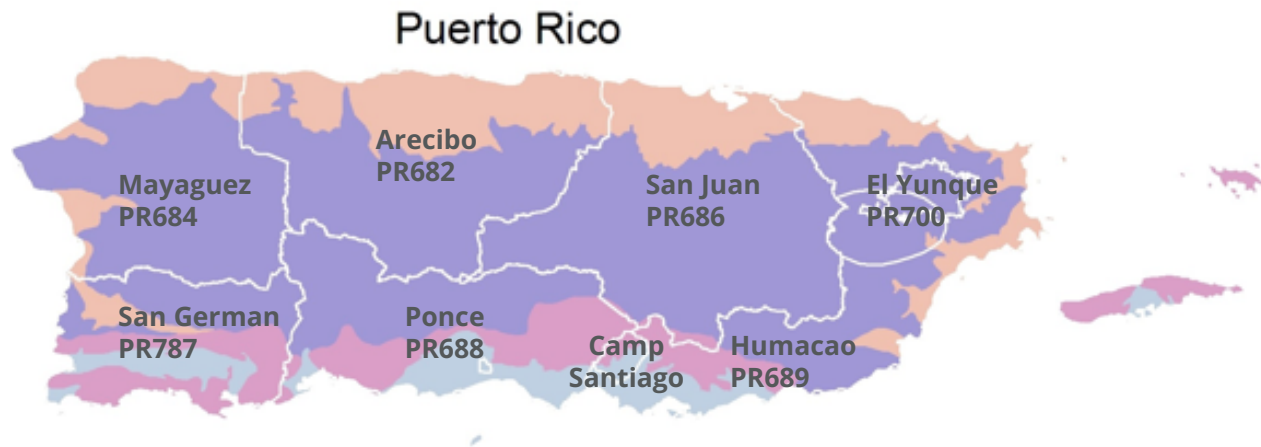
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National Cooperative Soil Survey Activities & New Crop Productivity Indexes

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Caribbean Area Soil Survey's

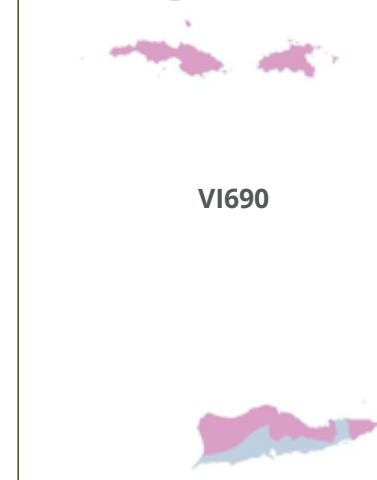
- 4 Major Land Resources Areas
- 9 soil survey areas
- 2,305,951 acres (including other land acres and water)

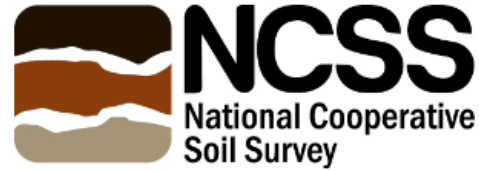


Major Land Resource Areas



US Virgin Islands





NCSS is a nationwide partnership of Federal, regional, State, and local agencies and private entities, since 1899

Works cooperatively to investigate, inventory, document, classify, interpret, disseminate and publish information about soils

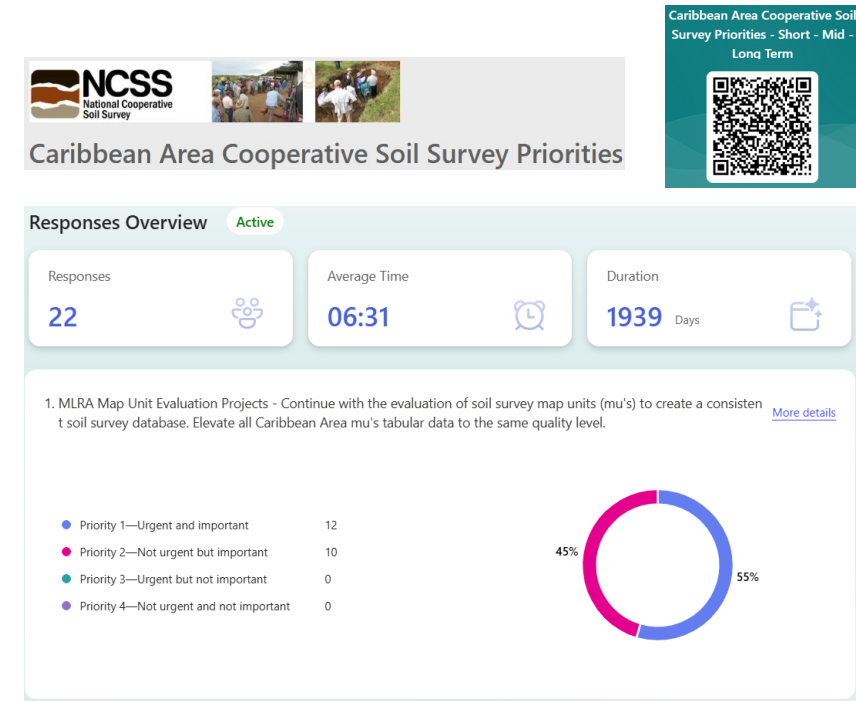
- The NCSS 10-year Strategic Plan Goals:
 - Communicate the importance of soils to the society
 - Increase the knowledge base for soils and ecosystems
 - Strengthen and expand collaboration
 - Ensure a critical mass of well-qualified scientist and technical specialist



NCSS Caribbean Area Identified Priorities

- 1-Development of Ecological Site Descriptions
- 1-MLRA Map Unit Evaluation Projects
- 1-Soil Education / Training for Communities
- 1-Soil Health – Project-Sampling-Monitoring- Develop Management Systems
- 1-Soil Survey Interpretations – Land Use and Productivity

- 2-Urban Soil Survey
- 2-Expansion of Coastal Zone Soil Survey
- 2-Soil Survey Update of Northern Puerto Rico and Mona Island Karst
- 2-Work Beyond the NRCS Caribbean Area Islands



NCSS Caribbean Area Activities

Project Title	Targeted Priority	NCSS Collaborator	Person of Contact	Period of Performance
• Ecological Site Descriptions Field Data Collection for Puerto Rico	ESD Development	FS-NRCS Soils	Dr. William Gould	2020 - 2027
• The virtual Soil Museum of the Caribbean	Soil Education/Training for Communities	Arte Suelo Ser-NRCS Soils	Dr. Zoelie Rivera Ocasio	2022 - 2026
• Soil health and edge-of-field runoff monitoring of a small ruminant farm with different grazing densities	Soil Health	UPRM-NRCS Soils	Dr. Mario Flores Mangual	2022 - 2026
• Tropical Soil Health Tool Development - David Sotomayor – UPRM - 2024 - 2028	Soil Health	UPRM-NRCS Soils	Dr. David Sotomayor Ramírez	2024 - 2028
• Field Testing Biochar as a Soil Amendment in Puerto Rico	Soil Health	PDC	Orlando Medina	2024 - 2026
• Development of Tropical Crops Productivity and Suitability Interpretations	Soil Survey Interpretations - Land Use Productivity	NRCS Soils	Bob Dobos - Manuel Matos	2018 - 2026
• Map Unit Evaluation Projects (10-15 projects each FY)	MLRA Map Unit Evaluation Projects	NRCS Soils	Samuel Rios - Manuel Matos - Darien López	2012-Ongoing



NCSS Caribbean Area Activities

Project Title	NCSS Priority Targeted	NCSS Collaborator	Person of Contact	Period of Performance
• Urban Soil Survey for the Mayaguez Municipality	Urban Soil Survey	UPRM-AES-NRCS Soils	Dr. Daniel Bair - Luis Colon - Samuel Rios	2026-2028
• Jobos Bay NERR Coastal Zone Soil Survey	Expansion of Coastal Zone Soil Survey	NRCS Soils - DRNA	Milton	2022-2026
• Boqueron State Forest and La Parguera Natural Reserve Coastal Zone Soil Survey	Expansion of Coastal Zone Soil Survey	NRCS Soils - DRNA	Samuel Rios - Manuel Matos - Darien López	2027 - 2030
• Soil Survey Update of the Northern PR and Mona Islands Karst	Soil Survey Update of the Northern PR and Mona Islands Karst	NRCS Soils - DRNA	Samuel Rios - Manuel Matos - Darien López	2026 - 2030
• Nutrient Management Training to the CARICOM	Work Beyond the Caribbean Islands	NRCS International Affairs-USAID/FAS	Dr. Michael Robotham	2023-2024
• UPRM Soil Class - Mexico, Belize, Guatemala	UPRM	UPRM	Dr. Daniel bair - Dr. Muñoz	2023 - 2025
• Development of Environmental Hazards SS Interpretations - Soil Mass Movement - Liquefaction Susceptibility - Acid Sulfate Soils	Soil Survey Interpretations - Land Use Productivity	NRCS Soils	Bob Dobos - Manuel Matos	2017 - 2027

What Are “Soil Interpretations”?

- Interpretations are models that use soil and site properties to predict how soils will respond to **land use** and management.
- “**Land use**” can have different meanings, for example:



Agriculture & Practices

Production agriculture, conservation practices, specialty crops

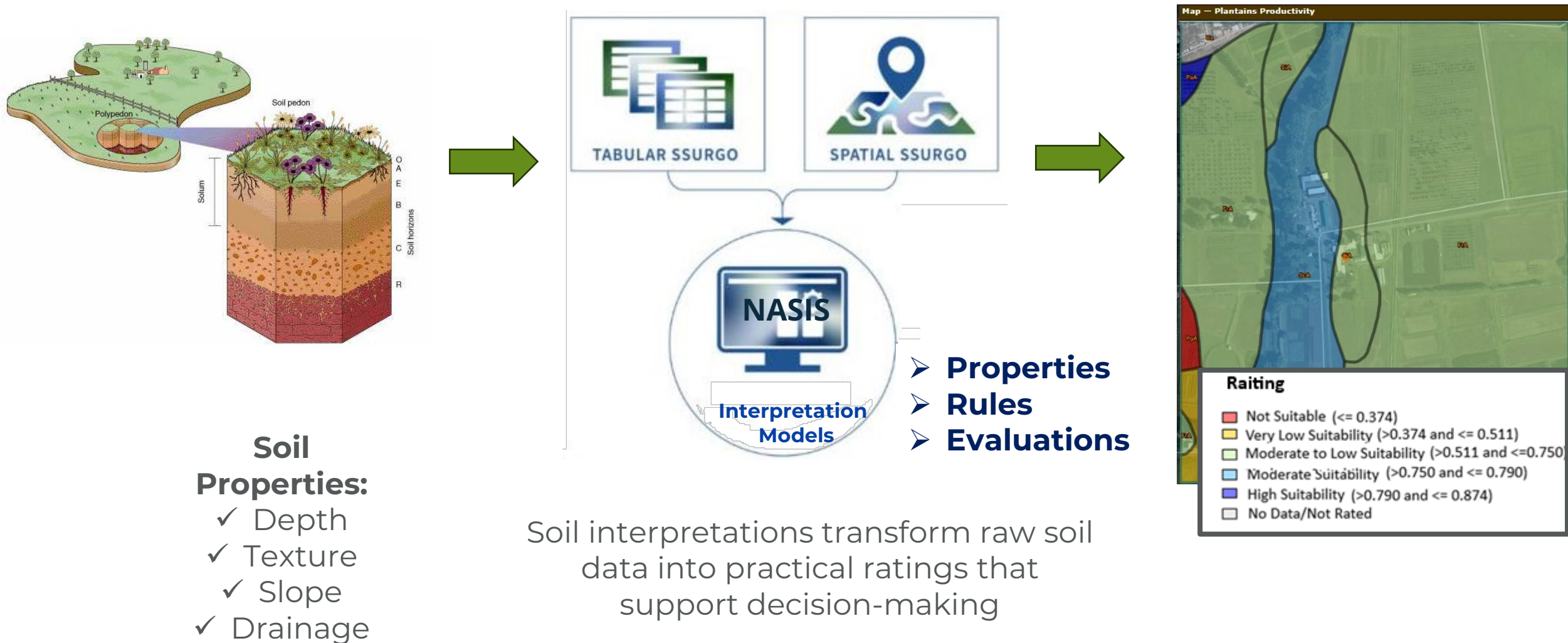


Environmental Roles

Sink for atmospheric carbon dioxide, habitat for a soil-borne pathogen

- In general, interpretations help us understand how practices, or different land uses interact with soils and landscapes.

How Soil Interpretations Are Made



National Interpretation

- There are currently 119 national interpretations (primary rules) that are ready to use.
- These interpretations are automatically included for all soil survey areas during the annual soil survey data refresh
- They are all available in Web Soil Survey (WSS) and SSURGO data downloads

Screen capture from National Soil Information Systems (NASIS)

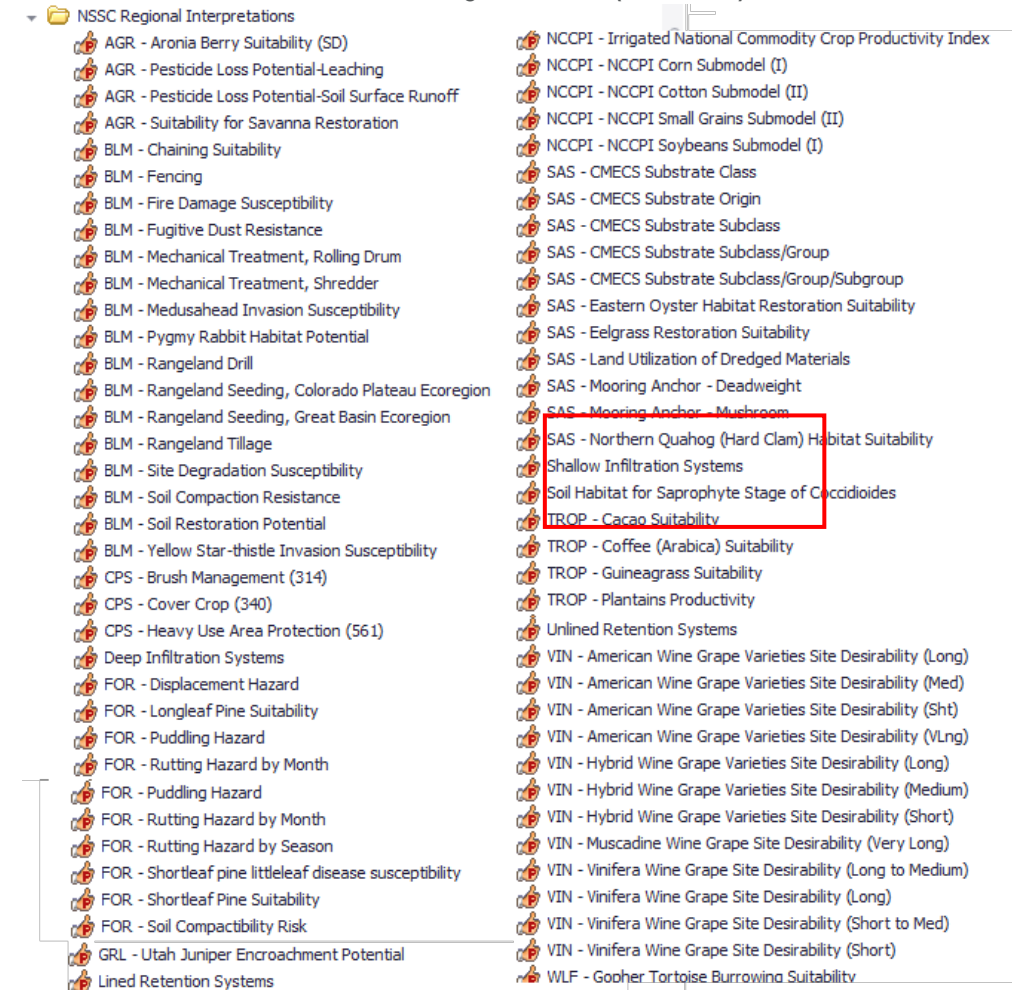


- AWM- Agricultural Waste Management
- SOH- Soil Health
- WMS- Water Management Systems

Regional Interpretations

- There are currently **70** regional interpretations that are ready to use
- These Interpretations are applicable in certain geographic regions
- During the annual soil survey data refresh we exported 15 regional interpretations

Screen capture from National Soil Information Systems (NASIS)



-**AGR**- Agriculture -**FOR**-Forest Management
- **TROP**- Tropical

Local Soil Survey Interpretations

Web Soil Survey

Available Crop Productivity and Suitability Indexes

Land Classifications – Classifies soils for agricultural or other uses.

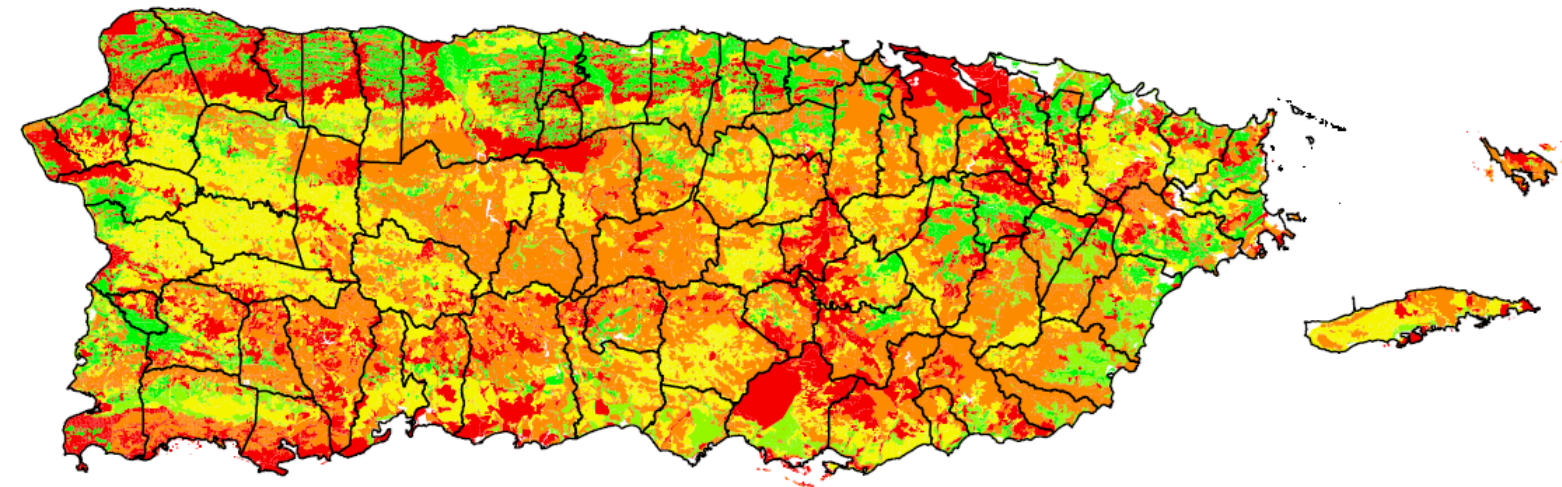
Cacao Suitability
Coffee Suitability
Guineagrass Suitability

Land Management – Ratings for tillage, irrigation, drainage, and more.

Plantain Crop productivity Index

The screenshot shows the USDA Web Soil Survey interface. The top navigation bar includes links for Contact Us, Subscribe, Archived Soil Surveys, Soil Survey Status, Glossary, Preferences, Link, and Logo. Below this, there are tabs for Area of Interest (AOI), Soil Map, Soil Data Explorer (selected), and Download Soils Data. A dropdown menu for 'View Soil Information By Use' is set to 'All Uses'. The 'Soil Data Explorer' tab is active, showing a list of 'Suitabilities and Limitations Ratings' and 'Land Classifications'. A green bracket on the left side of the 'Land Classifications' list highlights the following items: Cacao Suitability, California Revised Storie Index (CA), Coffee Suitability, Conservation Tree and Shrub Group, Conservation Tree and Shrub Group OLD, Ecological Classification ID, Ecological Classification Name, Farmland Classification, and Guineagrass Suitability. To the right of the list is a map titled 'Map — California Revised Storie Index (CA)' showing various soil types and their distribution across California.

Plantain Productivity Map (Puerto Rico)

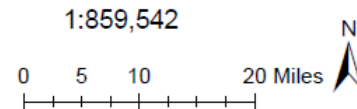
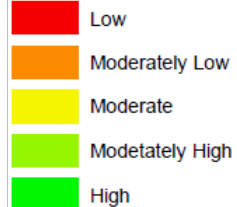


Legend

municipalities

Plantain Productivity

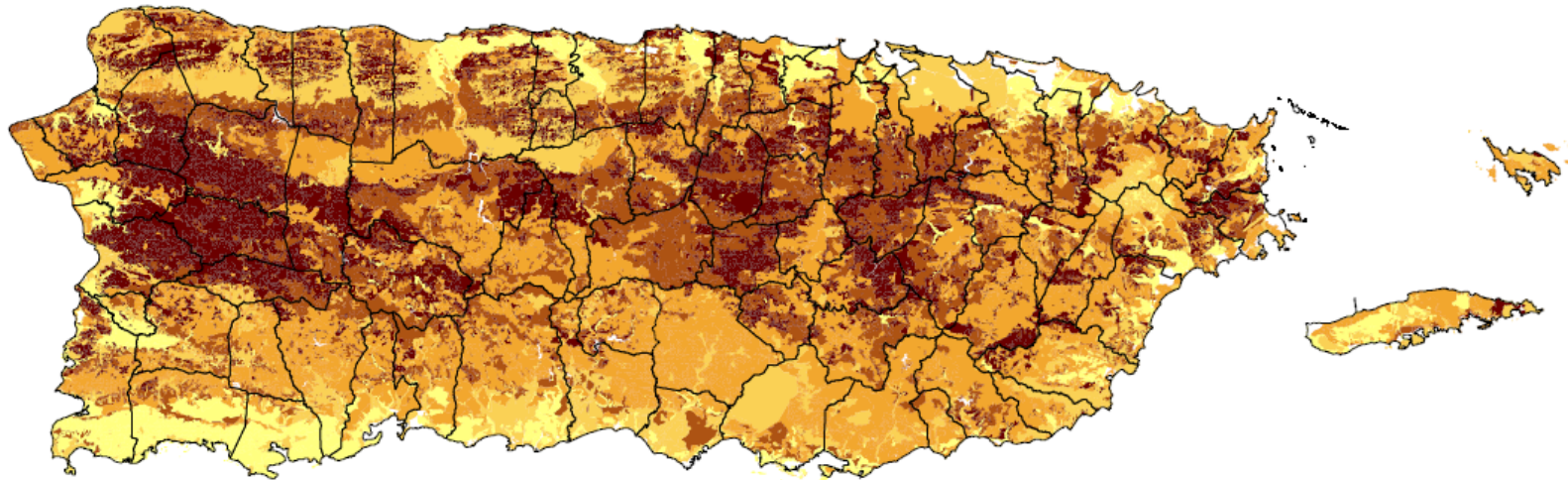
Average Rating



This interpretation evaluates soil for their potential to produce plantains under non-irrigated conditions.

Ratings are based on soil depth, drainage, slope, pH, water-holding capacity, and other key properties that affects plantain growth.

Cacao Suitability Map (Puerto Rico)



Legend

Municipalities

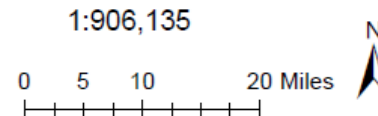
Cacao Suitability

Average Rating

- Not Suited
- Poorly Suited
- Moderately Suited
- Suited
- Well Suited

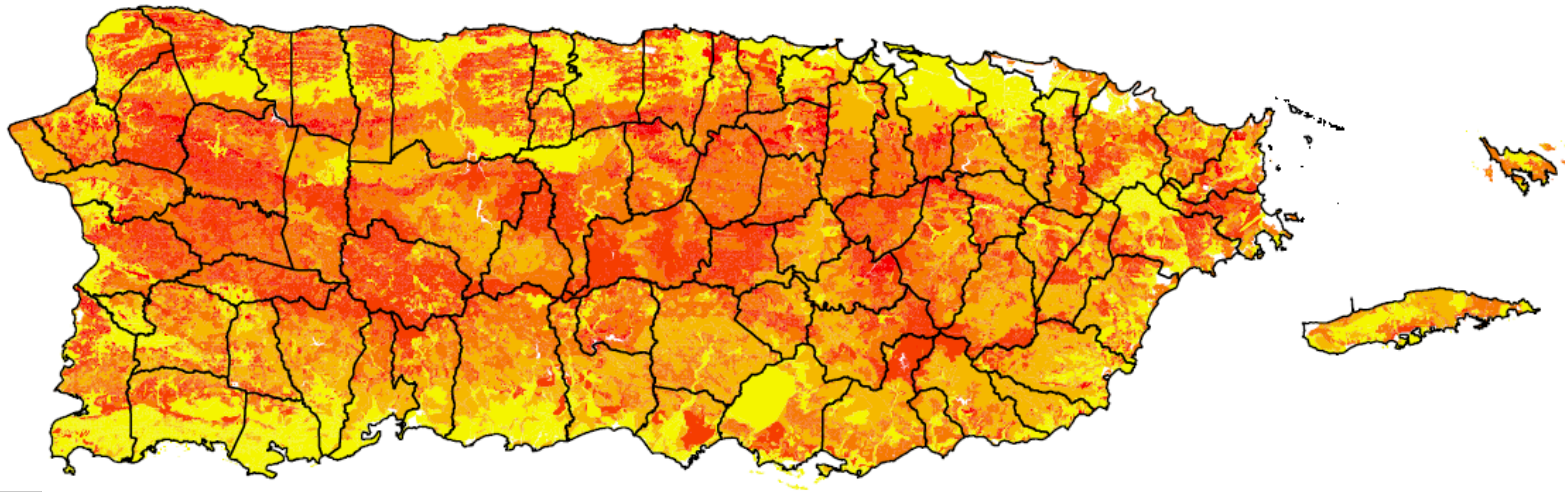


Best area for Cacao Cultivation



This interpretation evaluates soil for their potential to produce cacao under non-irrigated conditions. Suitability ratings are based on soil depth, drainage, slope, pH, water-holding capacity, and other properties that influence cacao growth.

Coffee (Arabica) Suitability Map (Puerto Rico)



Legend

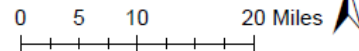
municipalities

Coffee Productivity

Average Suitability

- Not Suited
- Poorly Suited
- Moderately Suited
- Suited
- Well Suited

1:859,542



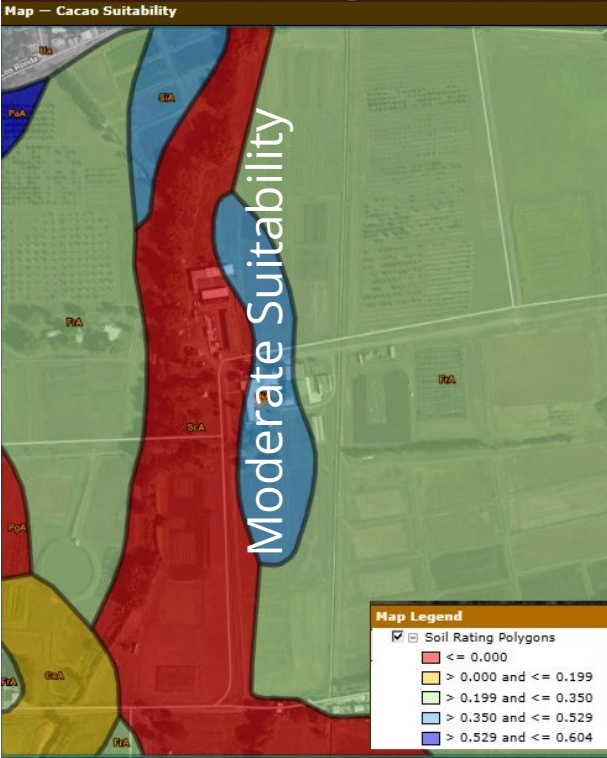
This interpretation evaluates soil for their potential to produce coffee (Arabica) under non-irrigated conditions.

Suitability ratings are based on soil depth, drainage, slope, pH, water-holding capacity, and other properties that influence coffee growth.

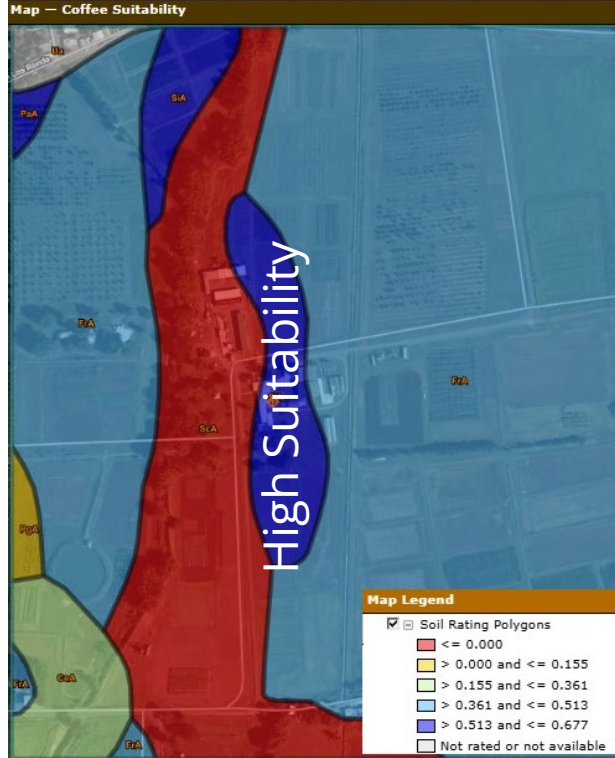
Producer can identify with areas best suited for coffee and which may present more limitations.

TROP-Interpretation

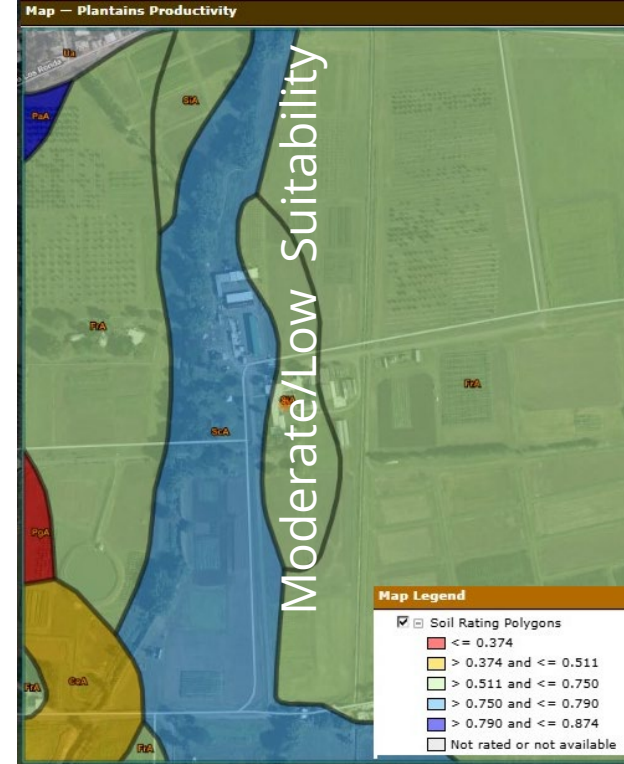
Cacao Suitability



Coffee (Arabica) Suitability



Plantains Productivity



Legend

Not Suitable
Very Low Suitability

Moderate to Low Suitability
Moderate Suitability

High Suitability
No Data/Not Rated

Soil Survey Interpretations on the Works

- Dynamic Soil Properties Response to Biochar
 - Biochar Variance Request - Soil Carbon Amendment (336 Code)
- Liquefaction susceptibility
- Plantain Productivity Index (Irrigated)
- Soil Mass Movement (Shear strength/stress)
- Suitability for Navel (“nebo”) orange variety in the Caribbean Area





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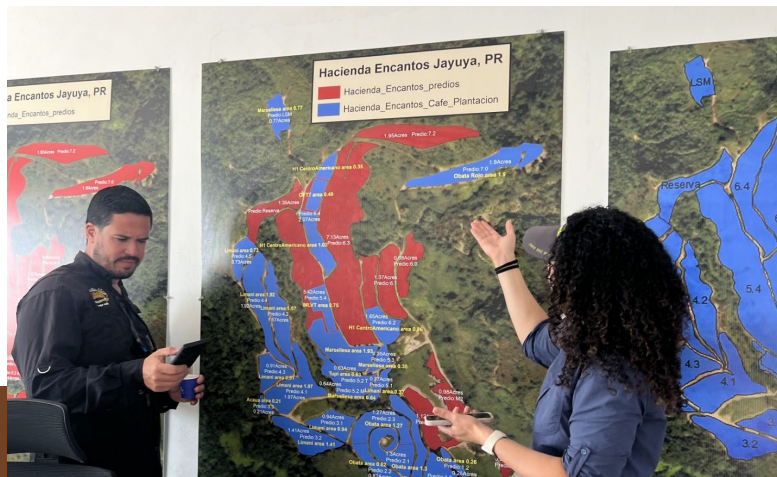
Acknowledgments



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Soil Survey Interpretations Focus Team Lead
Natural Resources Conservation Service, Soil and
Plant Sciences Division



FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION





Caribbean soil survey interpretations



Soil Interpretation Maps for Puerto Rico & the U.S. Virgin Islands

<https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/resources/data-and-reports/soil-interpretation-maps-for-puerto-rico-the-us-virgin-islands>

Connect with us!

- What other interpretations we should consider?
- Do you want to be part of the Caribbean Area National Cooperative Soil Survey?

Caribbean Area Cooperative Soil
Survey - Feedback



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 - a) FY 2025 Recap
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Priority Watersheds Discussion

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

NRCS FY2026 Chief Priorities: A Farmer-First Approach

Under Chief Aubrey Bettencourt's leadership, NRCS has established five core priorities for FY2026 focused on streamlining operations, improving field-level service, and advancing outcome-based conservation.

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| 1 | Preserve and Protect Agricultural Land | Reducing loss of productive farmland through targeted conservation easement programs (ACEP). |
| 2 | Modernize Infrastructure and Technology | "One Farmer, One File" system, upgraded field office technology, reduced paper-heavy processes. |
| 3 | Recenter Field Engagement | Shifting staff to direct, in-person technical assistance; faster conservation planning. |
| 4 | Strengthen Partnerships | Leveraging partners as force multipliers; accepting third-party certified plans. |
| 5 | Outcome-Based Conservation | Measuring success through on-the-ground environmental improvements, not just acres covered. |

Connecting Priorities to Watershed-Scale Action

The National Water Quality Initiative (NWQI) provides a direct pathway to implement the Chief's priorities at the watershed scale in the Caribbean Area. By targeting conservation delivery in DNER-identified priority watersheds, NRCS can simultaneously advance multiple FY2026 objectives.

Outcome-Based Conservation



NWQI requires measurable water quality improvements. Targeting watersheds with approved TMDLs and permanent monitoring stations allows NRCS to track real environmental outcomes, not just practice counts.

Strengthen Partnerships



Aligning with DNER's 2022 Vision leverages the territorial government's water quality monitoring infrastructure and regulatory programs. Coordination with PRASA, FWS, and TNC multiplies conservation impact.

Recenter Field Engagement



Concentrating NRCS technical assistance within priority watersheds with the highest CLU density ensures staff time is focused on areas with the most agricultural producers and the greatest conservation delivery potential.

The following slides present the watershed prioritization analysis that supports this alignment.

Background: Interagency Watershed Coordination



DNER Water Quality Priorities

Over the past two years, NRCS Caribbean Area has coordinated with DNER's Water Quality Area on watershed priorities under CWA Section 303(d).

DNER developed a Non-Point Source Ranking List using 12 criteria scored by Assessment Unit (AU), categorized into High, Moderate, and Low priority tiers.

Principal pollutants: pathogens, nutrients, and sediments from urban areas, livestock, agriculture, construction, and septic systems.



2022-2032 Vision (DNER)

DNER's 2022 Vision for CWA Section 303(d) refined priorities to focus on impaired waters for:

Nutrients, turbidity (sediment), and bacteriology (fecal coliform) with permanent monitoring stations, approved TMDLs, and enterococci exceedances.

NRCS seeks to align its conservation programs with these territorial priorities to maximize water quality outcomes through agricultural best management practices.

DNER Priority Watersheds: NPS List vs. 2022 Vision

DNER identified high-priority basins through its NPS Ranking List. The 2022 Vision further refined this to watersheds with TMDLs and enterococci exceedances. The table below shows major basins and their presence on each list.

Basin	NPS High Priority	2022 Vision Priority	Key Pollutant Concerns
Rio Grande de Loiza	Yes	Yes	Fecal coliform, nutrients, sediment
Rio La Plata	Yes	No	Nutrients, turbidity
Rio Grande de Arecibo	Yes	Yes	Fecal coliform, nutrients
Rio Grande de Anasco	Yes	Yes	Fecal coliform, nutrients, sediment
Rio Culebrinas	Yes	Yes	Fecal coliform, nutrients
Rio Grande de Manati	Yes	Yes	Nutrients, sediment
Rio Guajataca	Yes	Yes	Fecal coliform, nutrients
Rio Guanajibo	Yes	No	Nutrients, pathogens
Rio Coamo	Yes	No	Nutrients, sediment
Rio Yaguez	Yes	Yes	Fecal coliform, nutrients
Rio Fajardo	No	Yes	Fecal coliform, enterococci

DNER Priority Watersheds: Geographic Context

NPS High Priority Watersheds



2022 Vision Priority Watersheds



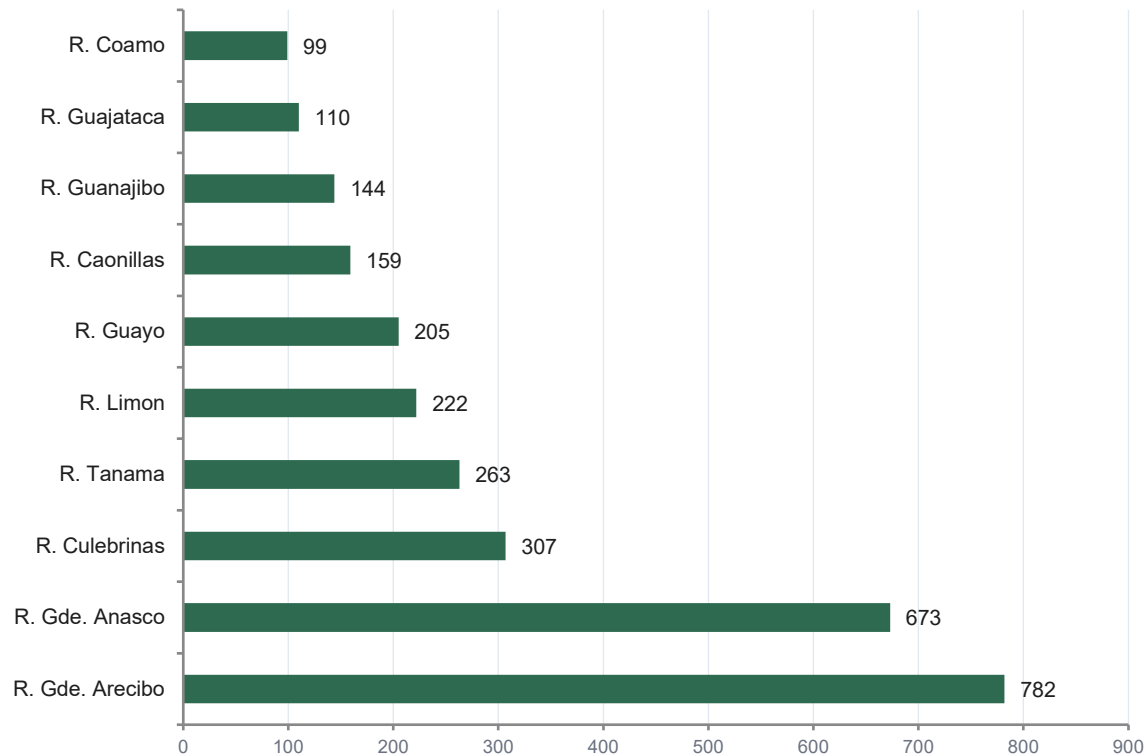
The NPS High Priority list (left, green) covers a broader set of watersheds island-wide. The 2022 Vision (right, yellow/green) narrows focus to watersheds with TMDLs, permanent monitoring, and enterococci exceedances. Note the concentration of priority areas in the central mountainous interior and northern coastal basins.

Source: DNER Water Quality Area: Maps from NPS Ranking List and 2022 Vision assessment

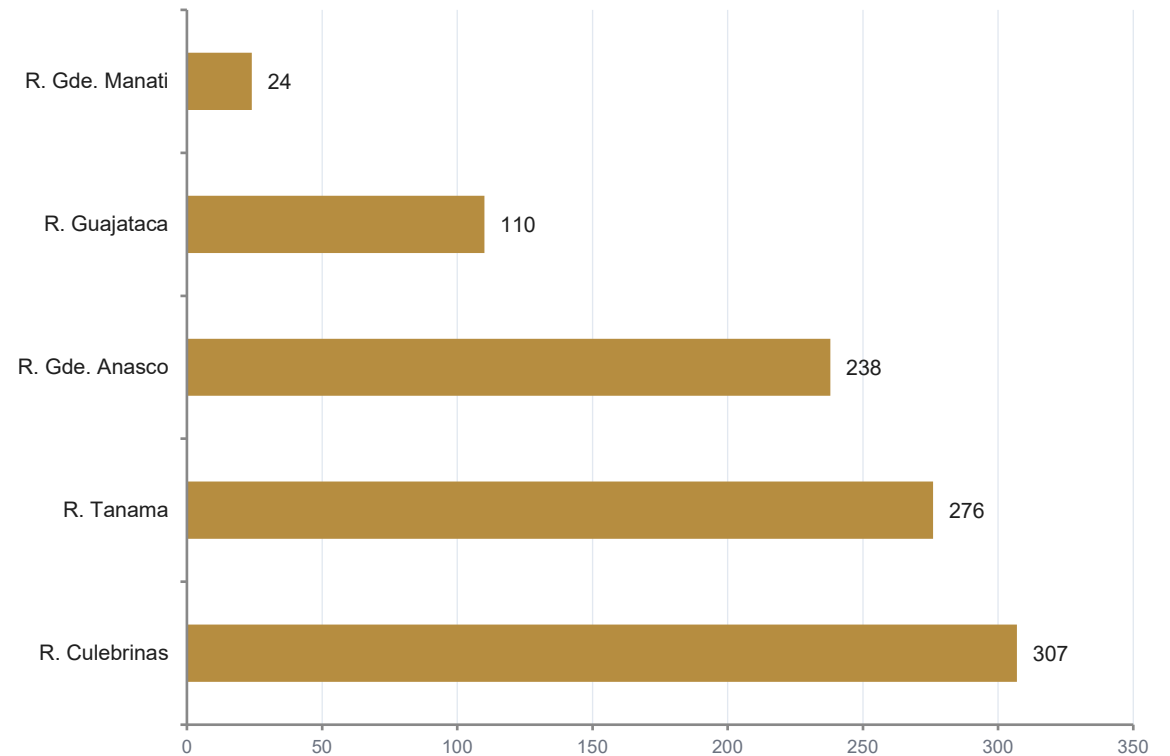
CLU Analysis: Agricultural Opportunity by Watershed

Active Crop Land Units (CLUs) within each priority watershed indicate where NRCS has the greatest concentration of agricultural producers to deliver conservation practices. Higher CLU counts represent stronger NWQI candidate watersheds.

NPS Management Program Watersheds



2022 Vision Priority Watersheds

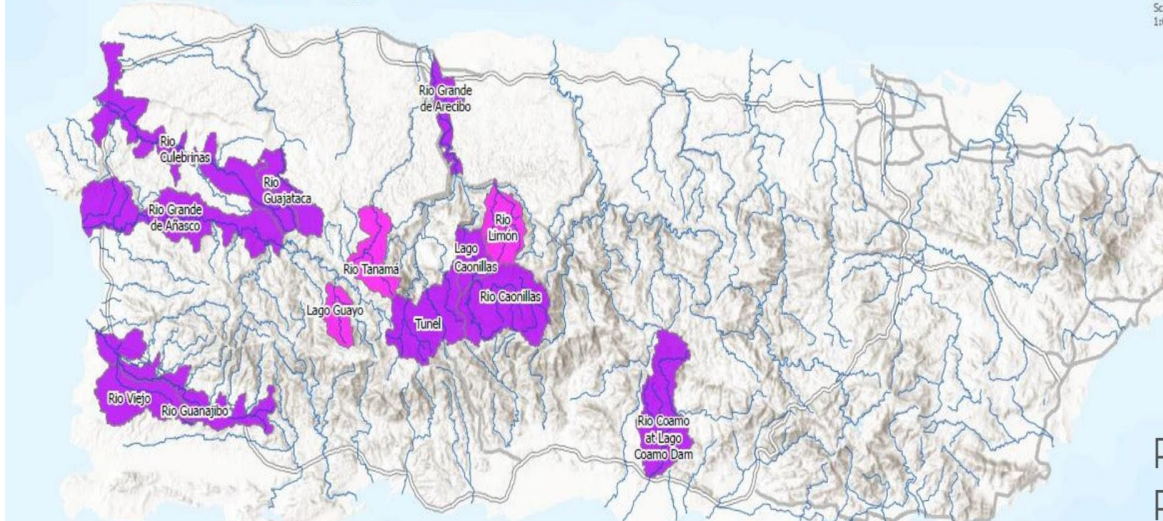


Source: NRCS Caribbean Area CLU Analysis, Gabriel Saldana (Dec. 2024)

Where Agricultural Land Meets Priority Watersheds

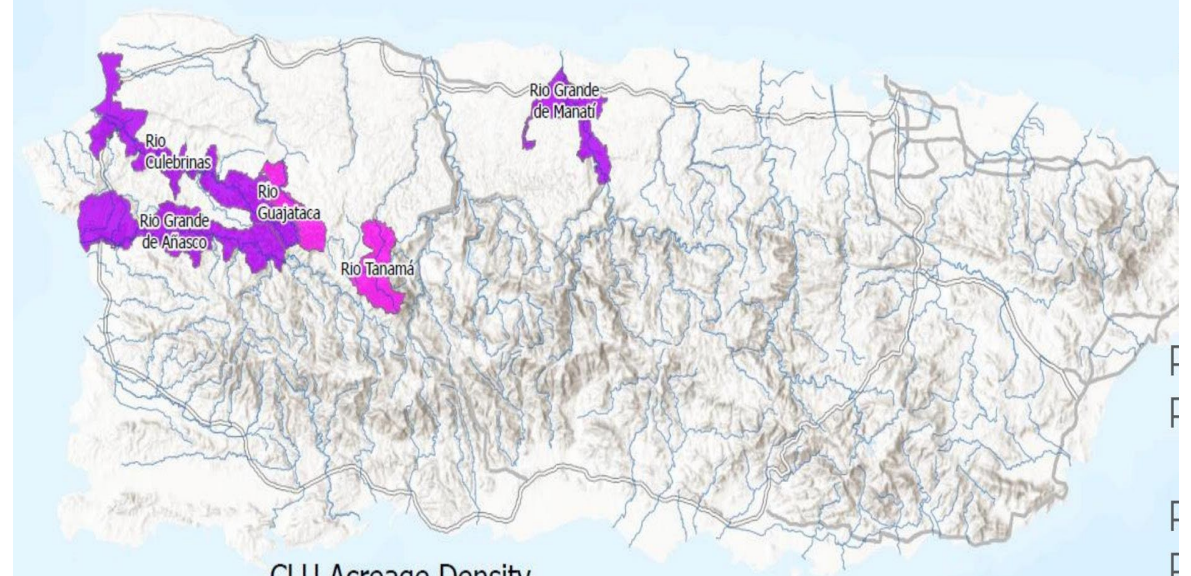
CLU Density: NPS Program Watersheds

Active CLU within Watershed identify by Non-Point Source Management Program Prioritization



CLU Density: 2022 Vision Watersheds

Active CLU within Watershed identify by Vision 2022 New Priority List



Key Observations:

Purple/magenta shading indicates CLU concentration (darker = higher percentage of watershed in agricultural use).

The western region (Culebrinas, Anasco, Guajataca) and central corridor (Arecibo, Tanama) show the highest agricultural density within DNER priority watersheds.

These areas represent the strongest NWQI candidates where NRCS can deliver the most conservation practices per watershed investment.

Other Priority Considerations

Several DNER high-priority Assessment Units correspond to critical reservoirs and lakes that serve as drinking water sources for PRASA and support sensitive ecosystems. These were not included in the CLU agricultural analysis but may warrant NRCS engagement. NRCS also started conversation with multiple partners in supporting water quantity and water quality projects.

Reservoir / Lake	Sub Basin	DNER Priority	Significance
Rio Grande de Loiza	Rio Gurabo	NPS + Vision	Major PRASA drinking water supply, metro area.
Rio Coamo	Rio Coamo	NPS High	PREPA water supply for irrigation.
Laguna Cartagena	Laguna Cartagena	N/A	Important project for USFW that would need investments outside of the wildlife reserve.

Existing Projects

Reservoir / Lake	Sub Basin	DNER Priority	Significance
Rio Grande de Añasco	Rio Grande de Añasco	NPS + Vision	Identified priority watershed with a significant number of farmers
Rio Grande de Añasco	Rio Prieto		Identified past priority watershed with a significant number of farmers in the mountain region
Rio La Plata	Comerio Dam	NPS + Vision	Major PRASA drinking water supply, metro area

Recommended Priority Watershed Candidates

- **Finish Reviewing and Submit NWQI Fund Request for:**
 - Rio Grande de Añasco
 - Rio La Plata
 - Rio Prieto
- **Request NWQI Funds for Watershed Plans for:**
 - Rio Gurabo
 - Rio Grande de Manati
 - Rio Culebrinas
- **Other Initiatives**
 - RCPP with PLN in Rio Grande de Arecibo
 - WFPO for Rio Coamo (PREPA) and Rio Guanajibo
 - Joint Chief and Wildlife funds to support water quality goals adjacent to reserves

Recommended NWQI Candidate Watersheds

Watersheds where DNER water quality priorities and NRCS agricultural presence converge offer the strongest candidates for NWQI designation. The following watersheds rank highest on both the DNER priority lists and NRCS CLU density analysis.

Rio Culebrinas

307

Farm IDs

Highest CLU count on both lists

Rio Grande de Anasco

238-673

Farm IDs

Strong agricultural presence, western PR

Rio Grande de Arecibo

276-782

Farm IDs

Largest basin, highest total CLUs

Rio Tanama

263-276

Farm IDs

Sub-basin of Arecibo, high density

Rio Guajataca

110

Farm IDs

Reservoir feeds northwest PR water supply

Rio Guanajibo

144

Farm IDs

Southwest PR agricultural corridor

Committee input requested: Do these watersheds align with your priorities?

Other Watersheds for Committee Discussion

Several DNER high-priority Assessment Units correspond to critical reservoirs and lakes that serve as drinking water sources for PRASA and support sensitive ecosystems. These were not included in the CLU agricultural analysis but may warrant NRCS engagement through other program pathways.

Reservoir / Lake	Contributing Basin	AU ID	DNER Priority	Significance
Lago Carraizo (Loiza)	Rio Grande de Loiza	PREL14A1	NPS + Vision	Major PRASA drinking water supply, metro area
Lago La Plata	Rio La Plata	PREL110A1	NPS High	PRASA supply, impaired for nutrients
Lago Dos Bocas	Rio Gde. de Arecibo	PRNL17A1	NPS + Vision	North-central water supply
Lago Guajataca	Rio Guajataca	PRNL3A1	NPS High	Northwest PR water supply
Lago Caonillas	Rio Gde. de Arecibo	PRNL27C1	NPS High	Central mountain water supply
Lago Patillas	Rio Gde. de Patillas	PRSL43A1	NPS High	Southeast PR water supply
Lago Carite	Rio La Plata	PREL210A5	NPS High	Central-east water supply
Lago Melania	Qda. Melania	PRSL50A	Vision	Southern PR, 2022 Vision addition

Next Steps and Committee Action

1

Validate or adjust the recommended NWQI candidate watersheds based on committee knowledge and local conditions.

2

Identify additional priority watersheds or reservoirs where NRCS conservation programs and other partners can support DNER's water quality goals.

3

Provide input on interagency coordination opportunities with DNER, EPA, PRASA, FWS, TNC, and other partners.

4

Establish FY 2026-27 planning milestones for watershed-scale conservation implementation in selected priority areas. This action item should include a robust conversation of third-party service providers.

NRCS Caribbean Area is committed to aligning conservation delivery with Puerto Rico's watershed priorities.

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Partner Updates

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center

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NRCS Puerto Rico State Technical Committee Meeting



February 11, 2026
International Institute of Tropical Forestry

FARM PRODUCTION AND CONSERVATION
FSA | NRCS | RMA | Business Center



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